

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOR RELEASE:
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ITALIANS LEND FAMOUS VENUS DE' MEDICI
TO GALLERY'S BICENTENNIAL JEFFERSON EXHIBITION

WASHINGTON, D. C. June 23, 1975. The renowned third-century B.C. sculpture known as the Venus de' Medici from the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence, Italy will be part of The Eye of Thomas Jefferson, the National Gallery of Art's major Bicentennial exhibition to be on view from June 3, 1976 to September 6, 1976.

This loan marks one of Italy's most important contributions to the U.S. Bicentennial celebration. The generosity of the Italian people is demonstrated by the fact that the only other comparable transatlantic event involving a world masterpiece of sculpture was the Vatican's loan of Michelangelo's Pietà to the New York World's Fair in 1964.

Considered by Jefferson's contemporaries to be the embodiment of ideal perfection, the Venus de' Medici (57 inches in height) headed a list of works that Thomas Jefferson would

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like to have owned in copy or cast for Monticello, his mountain home in Virginia. Such an important work of sculpture in the exhibition will dramatically reveal the eighteenth century's rediscovery of the classical world of Rome and Greece, one of the intellectual and aesthetic preoccupations of the society in which Jefferson was active.

First known as a part of the Medici collections at the Villa Medici in Rome, the Venus de' Medici was moved to the Medici's Galleria degli Uffizi in 1677 and remained there until the Napoleonic period. In 1802, at Napoleon's request, it was the only sculpture transferred from the Uffizi to the Musée Napoleon, which held it until the Congress of Vienna. It returned to the Uffizi in 1816 and has remained there since.

Jefferson's interest in Italy continued throughout his life. His home (Monticello) bears an Italian name. His famous Rotunda at the University of Virginia is a half-scale version of the Pantheon, one of the greatest surviving monuments of Rome.

The Gallery's exhibition, focusing on Jefferson's many far-reaching visual interests, will present the finest possible examples of art, architecture, and design that Jefferson saw and that, through him, have influenced the Nation. Included will be life portraits of Jefferson and the men with whom he

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worked; a selection of paintings and drawings that first appeared in the Paris Salon exhibitions of 1785, 1787, and 1789; an "ideal" gallery of works admired by Jefferson; and a major group of models and drawings illustrating French avant-garde architecture of the late eighteenth century. Also displayed will be the Design Competition drawings for The White House, more than fifty of Jefferson's drawings, and silver and furniture that he designed. An unusual feature will be a presentation of botanical items cultivated by Jefferson.

Chairman of the International Steering Committee for The Eye of Thomas Jefferson is Sir Francis J. B. Watson, former Director of the Wallace Collection, London. W. Howard Adams, the National Gallery's Assistant to the Director for National Programs, is organizing the exhibition.

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